How Weeping Assuages Grief

58 (*Excerpt*)

To Gasparo Squaro dei Broaspini; perhaps 1363, 1365, or 1369.

He deplores the death of a good friend in Padua.

. . . A little before his death I had lost another friend, one of the noblest spirits of our times, unless I am much mistaken. You too shared in this loss. In his case, more than in any other, I found some solace in tears. I wept his death; I need feel no shame in confessing what I was not ashamed to do. And since my mind was relieved and comforted by tears, I let them flow freely for him whom I could not but mourn. I discharged my grief once and for all, as I could only do by encouraging myself to weep. Among other incitements to tears, I used that of writing a letter to one of his close friends. It was perfectly sincere, but it touched my emotions so vividly that I wept bitterly both on writing it and on reading it over. This availed to allay my longing and to cure me of my moans. The result was that while I often sigh I have never wept again for him, and I think I shall not do so; I appear to have exhausted my supply of tears. But I hid away that letter, useful as it was to me, because it was full of pitiable, unmanly expressions. I didn't want anyone to know that I had descended to it at my age, and I did not think it worthy of inclusion in my collection of letters. But you who have such a thorough acquaintance with my works, who have devoted your mind and your hand to copying these fruits of my leisure, tempted, apparently, by nothing but their variety and novelty, you are bringing the letter from its hiding place into the public eye. But I thought I would warn you, before you write it out and before others read it, that the consolations in it were directed only to myself. I was so constituted that I found pleasure in what men find the contrary of pleasure; in some way I was softened and caressed by my own troubles. Nothing did me more good than my weeping; a torrent of tears extinguished the flames of my heart. . . .